
Capital Budget Committee

HB 2296

Brief Description: Responding to the statewide drought emergency.

Sponsors: Representatives Grant, Newhouse, Linville, Dunshee, Haler and Chase; by request of Governor Gregoire.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides funds for responding to the statewide drought emergency.

Hearing Date: 3/28/05

Staff: Alicia Paatsch (786-7178).

Background:

The Department of Ecology (DOE) declares drought emergencies by administrative order in Washington. Before it can declare a drought emergency, the DOE must determine an area: (1) is experiencing or expected to experience less than 75 percent of normal water supply; and (2) is expected to suffer undue hardships (such as crop failures, municipal water shortages, and fish passage barriers) as a result of the dry conditions. The Governor must provide written approval for Ecology to issue a drought order.

Funding for drought response may be appropriated by the Legislature through the State Emergency Water Projects Revolving Account, which receives revenue from the sale of bonds and may be used only for drought relief activities.

The State Drought Preparedness Account receives revenue from transfers that are specified by the Legislature and is used for drought preparedness activities.

Summary of Bill:

The bill appropriates funding to the DOE and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in response to the declaration of a statewide drought emergency. Appropriations include:

- (1) \$1.8 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005 from the state general fund for deposit in the State Emergency Water Projects Revolving Account. Funds from the account are provided to the DOE for costs incurred in taking action pursuant to the declaration of a statewide drought emergency;

(2) \$200,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005 from the state general fund to the DNR for costs incurred by the DNR to be able to activate fire fighters to respond to the heightened risk of forest fires pursuant to the declaration of a statewide drought emergency;

(3) \$8.2 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005, from the State Taxable Building Construction Account for deposit in the State Drought Preparedness Account in the capital budget for costs incurred by the DOE in responding to the state drought emergency.

The bill also declares that projects or measures for which funding or compensation will be provided must be connected with a water system, water source, or water body which is receiving, or has been projected to receive, less than 75 percent of normal water supply, as the result of natural drought conditions. This reduction in water supply must be such that it is causing, or will cause, undue hardship for the entities or fish or wildlife depending on the water supply.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.